

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Coded Wire Tags Removed From Tribal Lake Trout



During the month of December 2003, Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski extracted and read coded-wire-tags (CWTs) from lake trout. CWTs are microscopic metal tags placed in the snouts of juvenile lake trout at the hatchery. Hatchery personnel inject tags into the fish and

remove the fish's adipose fin so that tagged lake trout can be identified by anglers and researchers. Lake trout heads were collected during the spring fishery independent lake whitefish survey and fall lake trout assessment conducted by the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority. We also extracted and read CWTs from sport-fishery caught lake trout heads collected by Michigan DNR head hunters and creel clerks in Lake Huron. CWTs are extracted by cutting lake trout snouts into smaller and smaller pieces until the tag can be seen and removed. A metal detector is used to help the extractor find tags. CWTs are read under a microscope, and each tag's unique number is recorded. The tag number, when compared to stocking records, yields information such as stocking location, stocking date, fish age, fish strain, and hatchery of origin. In total, Kowalski removed and read 450 tags from approximately 500 heads. Not all adipose clipped lake trout contain CWTs, because some lake trout shed their tag and some are erroneously fin clipped. This concludes CWT extraction for the 2003 field season. All CWTs extracted and read at the Alpena FRO will be entered in the Lake Huron Technical committee common CWT database, which is shared among all contributing resource agencies. Data collected from lake trout CWTs are used in several ways. First, lake trout age data are used in population models that determine lake trout harvest limits for parties to the Year 2000 Consent Decree. Second, stocking location data are used to determine lakewide lake trout movement patterns. Finally, two existing studies to determine differences in survival between large and small stocked lake trout and differences in survival of various lake trout strains depend on CWT data. These outcomes are consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while providing recreational fishing opportunities and meeting the needs of tribal communities. The multi-agency nature of this work is consistent with the Service's goal of establishing and maintaining open, interactive communication with its partner agencies.

Adam T. Kowalski

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Survey of Presque Isle County Wetland Site

On December 9, Biologists Wells and Enterline surveyed the property of Dave Bregge. The survey was to determine the potential of a wetland restoration site through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. The property is located in Presque Isle County, Michigan on 80 acres. If restored, there will be 10 acres of wetland habitat. Wells and Enterline provided the landowner with information on fish habitat, grasslands and prairies for optimal wildlife practices on his land. Biologist Enterline will be designing the restoration plans with cooperation for the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This project will restore 10 acres of wetland habitat for migratory birds, amphibians, and enhance water quality for adjacent watersheds by reducing sediment loads. Many partners are involved with this project including NRCS, and the local property owners.

Susan E. Wells

Cooperation with Native Americans

Technical Fisheries Committee finalizes lake whitefish harvest limits

The Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC) met in Roscommon on December 3 to finalize lake whitefish harvest limits for 2004. Model generated harvest limits, based on the most current biological and harvest data, are produced annually by the TFC's Modeling Subcommittee (MSC) for management units where fisheries are shared between the five Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA) tribes and the State of Michigan in 1836 Treaty waters of Lakes Superior, Michigan and Huron. The Consent Decree requires the TFC to provide these final harvest limits to the Parties by December 1 each year. In management units where the whitefish fishery is reserved for the CORA tribes, harvest regulation guidelines (HRG) are established by the tribes according to terms of a Tribal Management Plan. Final HRGs will be provided to the Parties once CORA has established them. Alpena FRO Project Leader McClain (TFC Chair) and Treaty Fisheries Unit leader Woldt (MSC co-Chair), along with Bob Adair from the Regional Office attended the meeting. McClain mailed the final harvest limit recommendations to the Parties on December 15. Interagency participation in the Modeling Sub-Committee and the Technical Fisheries Committee ensures cooperation and agreement for establishment of safe harvest limits for lake whitefish and lake trout. The effort fulfills Service trust responsibilities to the Great Lakes natural resources (interjurisdictional fisheries) and to the 1836 Treaty Tribes.

Jerry R. McClain

Partnerships and Accountability

Fisheries Vision for the Future presented to Great Lakes Resources Committee

On December 4, Alpena FRO Project Leader McClain participated in a presentation summarizing the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future, to the Great Lakes Resources Committee (GLRC), a committee of Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA) charged with promulgating Tribal fishing regulations for 1836 Treaty waters of Lakes Superior, Michigan and Huron. The presentation was one in a series of similar presentations to the Service's partner natural resource agencies that seeks to familiarize those agencies with our strategic plan and to encourage their feedback and



recommendations. McClain had coordinated with CORA for the scheduling of the presentation as an agenda item for their bi-monthly meeting. The meeting was attended by approximately 40 representatives of the five CORA tribes and was hosted by the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians in Manistee, Michigan. In addition to McClain, the meeting was attended by Jordan River NFH Project Leader Rick Westerhof, Green Bay FRO Project Leader Mark

Holey, and Great Lakes Program Supervisor Bob Adair from the Regional Office. Improved outreach to partner natural resource agencies is a critical element of the Service's Fisheries Vision for the Future. Seeking partner input is essential for the Fisheries program to focus its efforts on the highest priority activities regionally. Continued coordination and communication will enhance existing partnerships and benefit the nation's fishery resources.

Jerry R. McClain

Fisheries Program Vision for the Future presented to local groups

Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill presented the Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future presentation to the Alpena Brown Trout Committee and the Thunder Bay Walleye Club during December. These presentations are part of a strategic planning process to enhance partnership efforts for effective management of Great Lakes fisheries and aquatic resources. During the presentations, Hill provided the groups with an overview of the Service's new Fisheries Vision for the Future and explained the activities of the Alpena FRO. Hill also requested feedback from the group on the Vision and sought input on how the Alpena FRO could better assist these groups. Opportunities for collaborative projects with the groups were discussed as well as strategies to enhance communication. Strategic planning for the future of the Service's Fisheries program requires enhanced efforts for partnering with state, tribal and local governments as well as NGOs to pursue collaboration and cooperation. Presentations such as these will improve partnerships and benefit the fisheries and aquatic resources of the Great Lakes.

Tracy D. Hill

Fisheries Program Vision for the Future presented at MACD Annual Meeting



Alpena FRO Biologist Heather Enterline presented the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future (Vision) at the annual meeting of the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts on December 10 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Michigan Conservation Districts are important partners to the Service in implementation of habitat restoration activities and/or watershed-scale plans. The talk went well with over 100 people in attendance. Feedback about the Vision was requested. Questions were asked regarding the lake trout rehabilitation program, Service tribal trust responsibilities, and funding opportunities through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Coastal, and Fish Passage Programs. No comments to the Vision have been received to date. The Fisheries Vision for the Future is a roadmap that describes priorities for the Fisheries Program for the next five years. Receiving input on this plan from our closest partners is critical to

make this plan beneficial to the nation's aquatic resources. Over 100 people from Conservation Districts throughout Michigan were present for this talk.

Heather L. Enterline

Public Use

Fisheries Job Shadowing Experience



Alpena FRO Biologists Kowalski, Koproski, and Bowen provided a job shadowing opportunity in fisheries for the Alpena Volunteer Center and ACES Academy on December 23, 2003 in

Alpena, Michigan. An ACES Academy student interviewed staff and learned about activities conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Alpena FRO. Bowen provided an overview of the Service and Alpena FRO, including mission, activities, how activities are integrated in the office, and job opportunities and career paths. Kowalski provided hands-on training in lake trout coded-wire tag recovery, processing, and how the tag provides fishery data and information. Koproski provided a demonstration on how fish scales and other bony structures are used to determine the age of fish. Job shadowing is a great opportunity for both the Service and students. The Service is able to partner with community organizations to provide education and students are able to experience jobs first hand and learn about career pathways. Partnerships and education and outreach are important elements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Fishery Program's Vision for the Future.

Anjanette K. Bowen

Breakfast Banquet Honoring Centennial Help

Fishery Biologist James Boase traveled to Wyandott, Michigan on December 17, 2003 to attend a breakfast banquet honoring some of the people that made last fall's Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) Centennial celebration a success. The breakfast was sponsored by DTE Energy and honored approximately 60 people. Congressman John Dingell was unable to attend, due to illness, but was recognized for his continuing support of the Detroit River ecosystem. Doug Brewer, acting Supervisor of the DRIWR, gave a brief speech thanking all of the people that made the celebration a success. River Navigator John Hartig followed with words of thanks and provided his perspective on the future of the refuge and stated that "this is just the beginning." Those that were honored included representatives from DTE Energy, Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Diamler Chrysler, LazyBoy Furniture, Bass Pro Shop, and Cabellas, as well as governmental officials from Wayne County, the cities of Wyandotte, River Rouge, Southgate, Riverview, Trenton, Dearborn, Monroe, and Windsor, Ontario. Honorees were given a framed picture with images of the DRIWR and Interior Secretary Gail Norton's visit signed by Congressman Dingell. This event was an excellent opportunity to network with local supporters of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Working with local governments and private corporations has been beneficial in aiding the ongoing research that the Alpena FRO is currently involved with in the Detroit River. Maintaining and the continued expansion of these networks is key to the success of not only for the research that Alpena FRO is conducting in this area of the Great Lakes, but to the Service

and its efforts in building a successful refuge in the heart of the Detroit/ Windsor Metropolitan areas.

James C. Boase

Leadership in Science and Technology

Trawling Vessel Status



In 2003, the Boston Whaler used by the Alpena FRO for trawling purposes was retired due to safety concerns. The vessel was primarily used to monitor the establishment and expansion of aquatic nuisance fish species (ANS) in various shipping ports in Lake Huron. Cracks in the keel due to age and use led to water intrusion between the hull and deck, and repairs were cost prohibitive. A new vessel is currently being fabricated by American MetalCraft Marine, Inc. of Clayton, NY to replace the Whaler. On

December 9, Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski

traveled to Clayton to meet with vessel designers from American MetalCraft and check construction progress of the new vessel. Koproski discussed vessel layout, helm and gauge set-up, and potential design improvements for the trawl winch system to ensure the new vessel meets station needs. The new vessel will be 24' in length, have an 8' beam, and have a walk around center console. The trawling boom, winch, and winch power system will be removed from the retired whaler and installed on the new vessel. At the suggestion of American MetalCraft personnel, the drive system for the winch will be modified to improve system charging efficiency and reduce deck clutter. Biologist Koproski also participated in a field trial with a vessel of similar hull design to learn the handling capabilities and characteristics of the new vessel. Aquatic nuisance species monitoring is a high priority of the Service's Fisheries Program due to the potential impacts exotics have on native flora and fauna. Staff from the Alpena FRO have been monitoring introductions and controlling the expansion of ANS fish species in Lake Huron since the office opened in 1992. The new trawling vessel will allow ANS monitoring and control to continue in Lake Huron.

Scott R. Koproski

Results of Study to Evaluate Survival of Enhanced Quality Lake Trout Presented

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt and Project Leader Jerry McClain of the Alpena FRO attended a Great Lakes Lake Trout Program meeting from December 9-11 in Marquette, Michigan. Meeting attendees included staff from the Great Lakes FRO's, Region 3 Federal Hatcheries, Regional Office, and Regional Fish Health Center. Woldt presented results from the Lake Huron Enhanced Quality Study, which compared coded-wire-tag (CWT) returns of standard and enhanced quality Lewis Lake strain lake trout yearlings reared at Jordan River National Fish Hatchery (NFH). For this study, paired plantings of standard quality (approx. 20 per pound) and enhanced quality (approx. 10 per pound) CWT lake trout were planted at each of four sites in both 1996 (1995 year class) and 1998 (1997 year class). The four sites stocked with experimental lake trout from north to south were Adams

Point, Middle Island, Sturgeon Point, and Point Au Barques. For each year class, approximately 30,000 standard quality and 30,000 enhanced quality lake trout yearlings were planted at each stocking site. Since 1996, these CWT lake trout have been captured in survey, commercial (gill-net and trap-net), and recreational gears. Woldt showed two types of analyses: 1) an effort independent analysis using Chi Square methods to analyze returns from all sources and 2) an effort dependent analysis using the Wilcoxon Test for Matched Pairs to analyze only survey caught fish. Woldt led an open discussion of the two analysis techniques, including the pros and cons of each, and compared results of the Lake Huron Study to those of the Lake Michigan Study, as presented at this meeting by Chuck Bronte of the Green Bay FRO. Overall, the results of the Lake Huron study using either analysis technique showed that the enhanced quality fish survived significantly better than the standard quality fish, although significant differences in survival were not detected for each site and each year class using the Wilcoxon Test for Matched Pairs. Woldt stressed that the Lake Huron study results only pertain to Lewis Lake fish reared at Jordan River NFH. Meeting attendees agreed, in light of both the Lake Michigan and Lake Huron study data, that the enhanced quality fish did survive better than the standard quality fish. Discussions then began regarding how to raise a larger number of enhanced quality lake trout. Evaluating the effects of hatchery rearing procedures allows the Service to better support lake trout restoration efforts by providing the best quality hatchery product possible. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species.

Aaron P. Woldt

Workforce Management

Alpena FRO Enjoys a Day of Winter Fun



Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski planned a day of wintry, weekend fun for the Alpena FRO. Adam made arrangements for Alpena personnel and their families to visit a local tree farm and share a horse-drawn sleigh ride, campfire, hot chocolate, sledding, and cutting a Christmas tree. Staff and families met at the

tree farm on Saturday, December 6 and were taken to the campfire. While at the fire, kids sledded and adults mingled over hot chocolate. Soon the horse drawn sleigh arrived and began the first round of rides through the woods around the tree farm. During the second ride, the sleigh went through rows of Christmas trees so everyone could pick and cut their tree. The day ended with snow lightly falling and one last sleigh ride through the woods. Days like these help staff get to know one another outside the office and build friendships which can improve office morale and promote teamwork. Teamwork in the workplace will help the Alpena FRO better meet Service goals and objectives for conserving America's resources.

Adam T. Kowalski

Alpena FRO Computer Upgrades Complete

During December, Administrative Technician Debra Turner completed the upgrades of all new computers the FRO received from year-end dollars. All software and data were

transferred to the new machines, both desktops and laptops. Network connections, printers, cameras, and the scanner were set up and compatibility checked. Norton and all critical updates were installed. With these upgrades, all Alpena FRO computers are now standardized with Windows XP and Office XP and the Alpena FRO staff will have improved efficiency both internally and externally. The new computers are quicker and less error prone. Standardizing the office also allows for a more trouble free management of office computers. These upgrades are consistent with the Service's Fisheries Vision for Workforce Management.

Debra L. Turner